

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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WSP Sees a Significant Increase in Major Criminal Investigations Involving Computer Technology

The dramatic increase of personal computing in the United States has led to the unprecedented use of computers in the commission of major crimes. Over the past year, the Washington State Patrol's Computer Crimes Unit (CCU) analyzed more than 190 computers containing 4,000 gigabytes of data. These investigations involved 5 homicides, 30 child pornography-child rape cases, and 24 narcotics investigations. Examples of CCU's 2003 case work include the murder/suicide of former Tacoma Police Chief David Brame and the luring and homicide of a young girl in Thurston County.

Computer technology has become an integral part of our everyday lives. Personal computers, which eight years ago would have cost the would-be buyer over \$2,000, can now be purchased for as little as \$500. Extrapolating from 2001 U.S. Census Bureau statistics^[1], we can conservatively say that in 2003, nearly three quarters of the homes in the United States have computers, with a significant number of those having access to the Internet. Increased use of home computing and easy access to the Internet have allowed criminals the ease and anonymity to steal one's identity, trade child pornography, sell illegal narcotics, or even draw unsuspecting victims to rape and homicide.

In 1997, the CCU investigated 24 criminal cases. In 2003, 52% of the 190 cases investigated involved serious criminal investigations. CCU detectives are making a difference every day by bringing to justice those who will use computers to victimize the citizens of Washington State.

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^[1] Source: U.S. Census Bureau "Home Computers and Internet Use in the United States: August 2000," September 2001